



Congress Passes Two-Month Extension of TEA-21

The United States Senate on Thursday passed a two-month extension of TEA-21 that had been approved by the House of Representatives earlier in the month. Passage of the legislation marks the third time Congress has extended the federal transportation funding act, which expired in October 2003.

Sen. Kit Bond of Missouri had placed a hold on the extension because of Democratic opposition to appointing conferees to work out the differences in reauthorization bills passed by the House and Senate. The opposition served as an obstacle to passage of a new six-year act according to Sen. Bond.

The senator removed his hold late in the day on April 29. His action allowed the full Senate to pass the extension keeping several federal transportation agencies operating through the end of June and reimbursement funds flowing to individual states for transportation projects.

Sen. Bond's removal of the hold was contingent on Democratic lawmakers agreeing to a cloture vote on the motion to go to a conference committee. Democrats, however, say they have enough votes to keep the motion from passing.

Extension of TEA-21 came on the same day that Congressional leaders met with White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card in an attempt to reach agreement on funding levels. Those emerging from the meeting said it was valuable, but that no compromise had been reached.

The Senate passed a \$318 billion bill in February and the House approved a \$275 billion act in early April. Members of the Bush Administration have said that the president would veto either version of the bill. The White House is seeking a \$256 billion reauthorization package.

House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee staff will meet with Bush Administration officials this weekend to discuss what funding mechanisms should be utilized in the ultimate reauthorization bill. Presidential surrogates have stated that a veto could be expected of any bill that raises taxes, implements bond financing or contains provisions adversely affecting the budget deficit.

If the weekend talks are successful, congressional leaders and White House officials will meet May 4 to further discuss reauthorization funding levels. Following the April 29 meeting, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee said that lots of numbers were offered and that an agreement was reached to work toward a funding level that could be enacted into law.

For more information, please contact Governmental Affairs Liaison Kent Van Landuyt at (573) 526-9778 or Public Information Manager Shane Peck at (573) 522-6996. MoDOT's website also highlights TEA-21 reauthorization at modot.org.